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12 Cultural Trends Church Leaders Can't Ignore (But Might)

By Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/author/carey/>) | 77 

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When you lead an organization — especially when you are responsible for leading an organization like the local church — there is a temptation to ignore trends or minimize the impact they will have on how you operate.

It's so difficult to gain and keep momentum, that when you have some momentum it becomes tempting to ignore the changes around you because they might force you to rethink your method.

But the truth is that **your method (your strategy, your approach, your plan) is not sacred; the mission is sacred.**

Andy Molinski calls it (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2013/04/10/andy-molinsky-how-to-adapt-to-cultural-changes-in-foreign-countries/>) global dexterity (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2013/04/10/andy-molinsky-how-to-adapt-to-cultural-changes-in-foreign-countries/>): The ability to adapt behaviours across cultures without losing who you are in the process.

Leaders who are willing to reconsider the methods to preserve the mission are usually the ones who succeed long term.

While there are dozens of trends that are impacting the church, the trends outlined below are what I would call 'organizational sleepers'.

We all see them.

Our lives are impacted by them every day.

But many leaders are not talking about their impact.

One of the reasons we're not talking about these issues might be that few of these trends have implications for the church that are clear cut or obvious.

Most of the thinking around these trends lead to wet cement conversations — thoughts that are open to reshaping, rethinking and reconsidering. Not every leader is comfortable with that kind of conversation.

So I offer them as things we need to be thinking about, talking about and praying through.

While there may be no clear answers, there should at least be conversation among leaders, boards and the thought leaders of any organization.

Here are the 12 trends in no particular order:

- 1. Online as the New Default.** You used to have to go to church to hear a message or music, or get the cassette or cd. Now you just need a phone. Every attender can (and often will) listen to any communicator, band or concert they want. And almost everyone who shows up at your door has checked out your church online before they came. *What are you doing to embrace the online world beyond a barely-supported and moderately outdated website, podcast or Facebook page?*
- 2. Wifi and Smartphones.** They are googling you while you're speaking, and checking out other options while you're listing yours. *Do you assume your audience is intelligent, literate and has options?*
- 3. Dialogue.** People want to talk, not just listen. While sitting around tables every Sunday may not be the answer, increasingly a church without conversation is a church without converts. *What scalable, meaningful venues do you have for people to go to online and inhouse for real conversation?*
- 4. Loyalty.** Brand loyalty is low. 4 of the top 5 global companies (<http://www.rankingthebrands.com/The-Brand-Rankings.aspx?rankingID=30>) didn't exist 40 years ago. Being around for a long time can be seen as a liability with the next generation. (Rich Birch

has a great info-graphic on this (<http://www.unseminary.com/how-global-consumer-trends-are-impacting-your-church-infographic/>.) *How are you showing the relevance of an ancient faith to the current generation?*

5. Lack of guilt. Guilt used to motivate people to change and even to come to faith. The next generation feels less guilt than almost any previous generation. *Are you still using guilt to motivate people?* (By the way, Jesus *never* used guilt to motivate outsiders.)

6. Declining trust in authority. People will still trust authority when the authority has earned their confidence. But they start out with suspicion. More than ever, trust is earned slowly and lost instantly. *How is the way you exercise authority worthy of people's confidence?*

7. Declining trust in institutions. You have to show people how an organization can help them, because by default, they don't think it/you can or will. *How are you demonstrating trustworthiness?*

8. Personalized, eclectic spirituality. People want to find their own unique path, and most start out that way. They will embrace the path of Christ, but they don't start out there. *How do you embrace where they start but encourage them not to finish there?*

9. A desire for greater purpose. Millennials will not stay long at work or causes that have little greater meaning or purpose. I wrote more on why you need young leaders in your organization here (<https://careynieuwhof.com/2012/10/why-young-leadership-is-essential-to-your-organization/>). *Is your mission and vision clear, compelling and inexhaustible?*

10. Personal mission. People aren't waiting for someone to change the world, they'll just do it. From charity runs to starting non-profits from home, the next generation not only believes they can have a global impact, many are having it. If your church doesn't have a burning sense of purpose and vision, you look lame compared to the average 22 year old. *How is your vision motivating people who have vision?*

 CAREY NIEUWHOF (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) **User reviews.** What you say about your organization matters less than what others say. People place far more trust in user reviews than advertising copy. *What are others saying about your organization and how would people find that out?*

12. The death of cash and cheques. When was the last time you wrote a cheque or paid \$500 cash for something? No one does that anymore. But every Sunday most church leaders expect most of their offering to come in via cash or cheque. *Is most of your giving happening online? Why not?*

Obviously there are *many* more trends that are impacting the church or will be shortly. What do you see?

What are you doing about any of these mentioned above?

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77 Comments

tbear on April 11, 2015 at 3:56 pm

Why we need the wisdom of our elders should be included. Too many people trying to sound cool and hip (as this article seems to be) forget that we are to biblically seek the wisdom of our elders. Too many today are neglecting what we have and need to learn from our older generations. Pretty sure there is a reason it says stuff about the foolishness of youth and the wisdom of our elders in the Bible.

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on April 12, 2015 at 4:36 am

Such a great point. Thank you!

[Reply](#)

Paul Creese on July 26, 2015 at 5:34 pm

Accordingly, churches should still be offering animal sacrifices just as the people in the OT did. You are missing the point here.

[Reply](#)

Larry Klutz on February 16, 2018 at 11:15 am

About as often as not this is backwards. Foolishness among the elderly is rampant and always has been (I'm 80 years old so I know first hand). The young are more ignorant than foolish. Experience will cure that. What needs fixing is the arrogance of the elders and the

impatience of the young. That done, we could all learn to respect each other.

[Reply](#)

Garrett on March 5, 2015 at 11:47 am

Hi Carey, I have been sharing your links with my fb friends and church facebook page and I think you are spot on with most of your cultural observations. I serve a rural community in southern Wisconsin and see the same trends particularly around sports engagements and expenditures. Is it permitted to share your outlines in powerpoint form with my congregations for discussion?

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on March 5, 2015 at 2:54 pm

Hey Garrett...great to hear from you. And for sure, you can share the insights with your church. I'm releasing a book in a few months featuring 7 conversations for church teams. Hope that will help!

[Reply](#)

Garrett on March 7, 2015 at 10:05 pm

Thanks Carey! Blessings!

Reply

Pastor A on March 4, 2015 at 6:14 pm

"Online as the new default" for most preachers/leaders this would be considered heresy. (Not that i'm objecting... but I digress). This is totally a new idea, and one that is uncomfortable mostly because we're not equipped to do it. I am really challenged by these trends. But behind these "trends" are people who need a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

Maybe the future it is online church..... if so, how do we bring community & relationship to people who participate? – I don't know.... but I don't think God is surprised by any of this. He can give us wisdom on how to disciple more people for His kingdom.

I think a bigger question is within the heart of the leader. We all want growth (i don't know any pastor that doesn't) but what if it looks different? More than likely it probably will require something different.

- What if it's not you that is designed to lead this next culture shift? – What if God is calling you to raise up a leader with the gifts & talents to speak to this next generation in a way that you might not be able to?

Are we willing to lay aside our status in order to have an impact? What if the status decreases but the impact increases?

- Tough questions. It's called a life of faith for a reason! – If you've read this far then let me explain that these questions/ comments really aren't aimed at the reader but internal questions that I am asking myself.

But in my transparency maybe you'll find something that helps you.

Lastly, we do not despair. God is for us and is with us. He is the God of peace and the God of joy. He knows the plans He has for all of us. He wouldn't lead us this far to fail us now. I think the ultimate prayer in these times is "God not my will, but Yours"

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on March 4, 2015 at 6:46 pm

Thanks Pastor A...you're right. It's new, but it's not. It's all about people who need Jesus.
Thank you!

[Reply](#)

Hayes on October 28, 2014 at 2:03 pm

I agree with the “nuts and bolts” aspect of some of this. Considering that the buzz word “relevant” has been around for many years now, my continuing question is why we need to spend the amount of time that we are, often, navel gazing with such deliberateness on the subject of whether we’re current enough. Entities and people that are actually relevant and “now” in terms of their look, level of technological savvy, ability to communicate in today’s terms, etc. tend to be that way by default. There happen to be kinds of organizations that are run by people who are wired to be interested in those issues, and therefore, simply change along with the culture. Articles of this type often seem to be able to be summarized thusly:

“Do you run a church? Is it a hip church? Are there lots of trendy young adults deciding things? No, you say? Dude! People are gonna think that you’re lame! Let us show you how to be cool so the beautiful people will want to attend your church before the one down the block gets them. Otherwise, your church is going to dry up considering your dependence on that old-fashioned, boring scripture and the fact that you actually talk about Jesus instead of tweeting about Him!”

In a nutshell, yes... Churches will have a difficult time relating to the current culture if they ignore their potential place on the Internet, the reality of the ubiquitousness of today’s technology, and people’s reliance on it. The context in which this is discussed here seems more in line with the notion of a concern about a loss of image.

What will we do when it dawns on us that the fact that we pray to a Man who lived 2000 years

ago, who we claim died for our “sin”, whatever that is, came back to life and is alive today way up in the stars somewhere, interested in the minute details of our lives is no longer a “relevant” or even sane sounding thing in which to believe? Jesus Christ is not cool to this culture or generation, any more than He was to any other. Those who come to Him will do so independently of the trappings of the culture in which they live, or they will not because they have made gods of themselves, a reality since the dawn of man.

It has often been said that if you run around asking people if you are cool, you are obviously not. This is no different for the church. I submit that we need to stop being concerned about our image, recognize that we will never compete with the rest of the world on matters of “coolness”, and realize that our message is enough to drive away most of the beautiful, trendy people of whom we are so desirous, if it’s spoken clearly enough.

Unfortunately, as I keep reading these kinds of articles written by well-meaning, earnest young millennials, I can’t help but envision our Lord being hustled into a green room by a couple of handlers who keep exchanging eye rolls while quickly giving Him a tutorial on how to use the tablet they’ve shoved into His hands, all the while nervously trying to figure out what to do with His hair and at the same time holding up tight T-shirt options in which to wedge Him.

A nauseating little scene, to be sure.

It’s not about bashing the technology, the clothing, the pretty people, the trendiness. It’s ironically lame how concerned we are about it.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on October 29, 2014 at 7:51 am

I hope that's not what this article is about...but everyone's entitled to their opinion.

[Reply](#)

Tim on February 27, 2015 at 12:11 pm

I disagree.. We can be way cool and should be. If you can't share the gospel with young people then you have no future. "Every voice is significant, therefore if you don't speak in a language one can understand, to them you are a barbarian." Even Paul was able to relate at Mars Hill and bring Christ into the conversation.

[Reply](#)

turtle on April 11, 2015 at 9:11 pm

Couldn't agree with you more! Thanks for stating the obvious. I'm so tired of people who think they're cool and hip wanting to say the church isn't and needs to be exactly like sin city or Hollywood to bring in the masses. God and His word is better than anything we mere

mortals can come up with. Lets stop trying to be of the world and worldly and just be in it, while sharing the news of God's love and His son.

Reply

Paul Creese on July 26, 2015 at 6:06 pm

'..needs to be exactly like sin city or Hollywood to bring in the masses...Lets stop trying to be of the world and worldly and just be in it, while sharing the news of God's love and His son.' Where exactly in the article did you get this idea from? Are you saying for example that making a contribution to a church online is against the principle of God and tantamount to worldliness and sin? I fail to see the point you are making here! We are suppose to preach the gospel to the world. How will the world respond to a message they cannot understand and relate to if it is spoken in a language it does not relate to or understand? Look at Jesus Christ, he was able to relate to people of different cultures, occupations etc, He told stories and spoke in agricultural language because those were the cultural media that resounded with people. Why do you think at Pentecost people spoke in tongues(different languages)? Why did Paul said the he became a gentile and a Jew so that the gospel could be preached? Paul was talking about the adoption of the message of Christ so that it could be understood and accepted within the culture. The Gospel never changes, but culture does. Our job is to find ways to present the never Changing Gospel of Christ so that it is understood and accepted within each culture. Let us not put Jesus Christ into a box we have designed

on our own. It is Jesus Christ who transforms and changes people, not our strategies and methodologies. Our job is to present Jesus Christ to people. This means speaking in a language and operating in the existing culture so that people can understand what we are saying. Let us not adopt an attitude of spiritual laziness by trying to maintain a spiritually status quo that is non-productive and generates an environment of alienation, isolating the very people Jesus is trying to reach.

Reply

David on March 11, 2018 at 6:46 am

Funny—I envision Jesus schooling his disciples on how to use their technology to better reach their generation.

Reply

Skeeter McClusky on October 26, 2014 at 3:16 pm

This is not new...only the “names” or “cultural distractions” are new. That is why we are to preach the Word of God without “fluff” – it is relevant to every culture in every age. Preach Christ and Christ crucified and let God do the work. This generation is looking for something real...just as

was the generation of Christ.

Reply



Larry on August 2, 2014 at 12:35 pm

This is an excellent article to generate thought as well as dialogue regarding these issues and their impact upon the church. Culture is the social environment in which we find ourselves. We must adjust to face these realities with methods and approaches that take into account the changes society has experienced. An old message has to be packaged within these realities in new ways for the masses to see it and hear it. The Holy Spirit will take it from there in the same manner as it was on the first day in the life of the church when Peter preached!

Reply

Adam on June 28, 2014 at 10:33 am

Would love to also add that part of what is missing is that God is a supernatural God; and we are called to lay hands on the sick and join together in corporate prayer. The power of God is underestimated by many people today, and that's because we don't practice the gifts of the Spirit.

[Reply](#)**12 Cultural Trends Church Leaders Can't Ignore (Bu... | The Richard W. Hendricks Experience**

(<http://www.richardwhendricks.com/12-cultural-trends-church-leaders-cant-ignore-bu/>) on May 14, 2014 at 10:40 am

[...] Cultural Trends Church Leaders Can't Ignore (But Might) | careynieuwhof.com
careynieuwhof.com/2013/06/12-cul... via [...]

[Reply](#)

TJ on May 1, 2014 at 12:51 pm

Carey I think these are all trends that are very real and great questions to ask of our churches. The only thing I would push back on is that sometimes the church needs to fight against the culture rather than embracing it. I think it's good to remember this when we ask how to respond to any given trend. The very first question is, is this a trend we adopt or oppose? I don't think we should oppose culture just to do so or because of some misguided culture war, however. But some aspects of culture are contrary to or hindrances to the Gospel and can't just be adapted.

To take an example from your list, the push towards digital giving is a trend I believe we should resist to a point. While I think it's good to make giving as easy as possible, the bible presents giving as an act of worship. If giving is a corporate act of worship (as it seems to be throughout

Acts) then it can't be divorced from the worship service and become purely digital. So the question becomes how do we teach biblical ideas about giving in a world where nobody carries cash or checks anymore? How do we facilitate giving while reinforcing it as a part of worship?

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) on May 2, 2014 at 8:23 am

That's a great question TJ. I struggle with that too. We still hold an offering and thank people who have already given on line. I think that the act of worship at its heart is the sacrifice (sounds kind of Old Testament, doesn't it)? When I give online (and I do), I feel the sacrifice as much as I do when I would drop a check into the offering plate Sunday. I think the size of the gift however given is the sacrifice when people give sacrificially. But I agree we should not divorce it entirely from public worship...but even acknowledging that people have given honours that.

*Carey Nieuwhof, Lead Pastor *

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Reply

Dieter on February 17, 2015 at 11:40 pm

how has churches not opposed culture in general? More times then none churches are fighting progress. Gay marriage, science, technology, schools, and freedom, jeez the list can go on. Churches or better word religion, has fought too much to keep the "old ways" intact (rude way to say it, I'm very sorry). Too much wanting to go back instead of accepting and going forward in general. I'm sorry if I am out of line here.

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<http://www.careynieuwhof.com/>) on February 18, 2015 at 7:58

am

Often we have...and sometimes it's good and sometimes it's terrible. We can also co-operate with culture. I believe in using the culture to reach the culture even though we're distinct from the culture. It can be very effective.

Reply

Eric Wohner on April 10, 2014 at 9:54 am

In John 11:47-50, we see an extreme example of “culture” trumping mission. If anyone had asked the religious leaders in this counsel, what is your mission, I can imagine one of them answering, “Our mission is to glorify Y_H”. However, their plotting to kill Jesus (and Lazarus – see John 12:10,11) demonstrates that their Y_H, but to the religious culture that they idolized. Yes, this is an extreme example, but it is not an isolated one. The culture of religion has trumped the authority of the Word and the leading of the Spirit in our churches today, which is why men like Thom Rainer (Breakout Churches) can rightly point out that 90% percent of our churches in N.A. are ineffective and in decline.

Reply

Randy Burbank on April 3, 2014 at 11:28 pm

Guest, what happened to the dinosaur? Its culture changed, it didn't, it died. The Message is timeless, but the ways we share it must change or we go the way of the dinosaur.

Reply

guest on April 3, 2014 at 11:57 am

And

the old people who don't own smartphones and are appalled that you want them to "tweet" at you in the middle of worship...where are they supposed to go? Or the young moms juggling babies and baby accoutrements in the pew, not grasping everything but having the basic sense that this church thing is something they want for their children...I'm supposed to tell them to just "chart their own unique path"?

Reply

Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) on April 3, 2014 at 1:53 pm

No...that's not it at all. And I have to say 'guest' that you sound quite cynical. That's really too bad.

[Reply](#)

guest on April 3, 2014 at 3:04 pm

I am incredibly cynical about hip, ironic, modern, do-it-and-they-will-come 'solutions' that attempt to improve on Jesus Christ by subjugating Him to cultural trends. Which is precisely what I see in this post. If the only reason people attend a local church is because "that one down the block is cool, man", then the instant the top line on the "trending feed" changes, they will be out the door. Because they haven't been enticed with Jesus, they've been enticed with "hey look, we're relevant, look, see, I promise we are!" Meanwhile...all the old people have left, along with all the young people who want more than cultural banality, because we have made it abundantly clear that *their* spiritual needs are not valued.

[Reply](#)

Andrew Penner on May 15, 2014 at 10:31 pm

'Guest', it seems you are missing that it is impossible to act separate from a cultural context. Church by definition should be focused on the object of its faith, but it is always expressed through a cultural lens. Older folks and young mothers are just as much a part of culture as young hipsters, though perhaps they connect with different aspects or expressions of culture. It appears to me that you are simply cynical about the value of any cultural lens or expression other than the one you are used to.

What frustrates me most about these types of conversations are people that fail to see that we are always operating within a cultural context (just as Jesus was) and that they use relatively insignificant cultural details from the Bible to justify a lack of relevance to the majority contemporary culture.

Part of what I appreciate about this article is the effort to spark change while retaining the aspects of Christianity that should not be changed. It sounds to me like that young mom was in the middle of charting her own path, and if the older folks don't want change there are an overabundance of outdated churches for them to attend.

Reply

chodges on May 21, 2014 at 10:19 am

Well said....

Pat on September 3, 2014 at 8:49 am

This is Pat with my two cents worth. I was talking with two young ladies last night after an event meeting at church and they told me that I'm the first person over 60 that they have come to trust (see me as legitimate) in a church. They told me it all comes down to "love one another" or "love thy neighbor as thyself". We have to remember how important love is for the other elements to work.

Paul Creese on July 26, 2015 at 6:35 pm

John 6:44 "No one can come to the me except the Father draws him" Why do we Christian assume to prescribe exactly how and when the Father is suppose to draw people to Jesus Christ? This is the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot

conjure up in our mind some prescriptive operational formula for God. Are you saying that God is incapable of drawing people in an environment that is "cool and hype"? Really? God is every where man? God is the one who chooses how, when and where he will draw someone to Him. Not us. Let us not put limit on God's power and try to fix Him to confirm to our religious ideology.

[Reply](#)

alethia agape on April 2, 2014 at 9:46 am

All things needed to be considered and embraced as necessary, yet we must remember that the Church is a living breathing body of small family groups that circumscribe the world. We need to understand the business and corporate strategies, but not fit church within them. Church is above and beyond and can be a 24/7 existence that prophetically critiques the former. And yet, so many nice people who want that change revert to what they abhor elsewhere when given power among their fellow 'nice' members. What if we began living out as a global interconnected family rather than a covenanted social club, broken into several chapters, and run by CEO's?

[Reply](#)

Micki on March 17, 2014 at 12:17 am

I once read a book that told what years a pastor could probably expect a crises in his church and the first came at about 18mo and it gave intervals where these could be expected. Does anyone remember the name of this book?

Reply

John Waldo (<http://nextstepinitiatives.com>) on February 27, 2014 at 11:45 am

Great stuff Carey!

Reply



DwannHolmesRollinson on December 3, 2013 at 10:13 am

Love your post. All resonates with me and what we see here in Jacksonville, Florida. My husband and I pastor together and smartphones and social media are incorporated within our services, as well as giving via debit/cc. Plus, we are now incorporating online teaching etc ...within our new covenant members training course to accommodate those who are not always able to show up on traditional worship days. Good stuff sir!

[Reply](#)

Jason Bachand on November 6, 2013 at 12:39 pm

Here's a trend that pastors should not ignore:

<http://www.religionnews.com/2013/09/17/denominations-decline-numbers-unpaid-ministers-rise/> (<http://www.religionnews.com/2013/09/17/denominations-decline-numbers-unpaid-ministers-rise/>)

[Reply](#)

Jason Bachand on November 6, 2013 at 12:44 pm

In other words, as people's expectations about what "church" is meet with the harsh reality of mainline decline, another trend has emerged – part-time pastors, two or even three-job pastors, and unpaid pastors. The mainlines may need to rethink ministry as a group function rather than a "master-disciple" model of one authority figure leading a flock. The Quakers manage it quite well, and from my observations have a vibrant community without any trained clergy in place.

[Reply](#)

Tony Burton on January 12, 2014 at 5:23 pm

My father pastored two churches back in the Seventies, and he ALWAYS had another job, sometimes two, because the church simply didn't provide financial support. Not couldn't, mind you, but didn't. And this was in the day when people expected their pastors to spend their time visiting parishioners, seeing the sick, counseling, etc. It didn't work well.

Reply

Dustin on July 31, 2013 at 4:39 pm

I can offer the point of view of someone who doesn't attend church and isn't particularly religious. I am passionate about father's and children's rights and equality in family law. Most of my friends have some cause they are passionate about as well. Perhaps if the churches spent more resources on helping PEOPLE than building big fancy building and having manicured lawns more people would be on board to work with them. I personally believe that if churches of varied religious beliefs banded together to fix social problems like poverty, drug abuse, mental illness, and my cause discrimination in family law, they would have a wonderful effect on society and attract more followers.

[Reply](#)

Carey Nieuwhof (<https://careynieuwhof.com/>) on August 3, 2013 at 9:20 am

Dustin...thank you for this, and yes. I agree. Resources into people is always better than resources into buildings. For sure we need to have a place to gather people, but if you look at creating footprints that are lighter than traditional buildings, you can do both well. This fall at our church we are doing a huge push to help partner with community organizations to address some of the social needs around us. Thank you Dustin. I hope you find a Christian community like that near you one day.

[Reply](#)

12 Cultural Trends Church Leaders Can't Ignore (But Might) | Grace and Peace (<http://xapic.wordpress.com/2013/07/31/12-cultural-trends-church-leaders-cant-ignore-but-might/>) on July 31, 2013 at 12:52 pm

[...] More: 12 Cultural Trends Church Leaders Can't Ignore (But Might) | careynieuwhof.com. [...]

[Reply](#)

Tony Myles (<http://tonymyles.blogspot.com/>) on July 30, 2013 at 1:07 pm

Worth a thought – if these points are valid, they do not in themselves become a destination. Rather, we have to become missionaries to where culture is by bringing them Jesus where they “live” or are at... and then loving and leading them to the point where these things don’t define them anymore.

I love what the Bible says about bringing a “sacrifice” of praise – a church can’t expect someone who isn’t yet a Christian to do that, so we have to reach them... and likewise help them get to the point where they aren’t still demanding being “fed” or dazzled a few years down the road like they did back in the day. My sense is that’s a hurdle for churches who try to engage people on points like these as much as it is for churches who don’t even try to engage. We have to meet people in their story, but then usher them into God’s Story where personal preference and demands face the call to “deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me.”

Reply



cnieuwhof on July 30, 2013 at 8:34 pm

Hi Tony. I agree with you that the destination is the same. I just think our methods of helping people along that journey need rethinking. But for sure, we’re leading them to a brand new place in their lives.

Reply

Carol Dalton McCormick on August 12, 2014 at 5:09 pm

I thinking acting Christian can go a long way to earn the respect of our fellow man; from being courteous as drivers on the road; being kind by saying hello; helping a fellow neighbour; even something as simple as holding a door for someone and it's bound to have a snowball effect. Everyone wants to feel wanted and loved by God and fellow man. Perhaps this can lead to the new place in their lives.

Reply

12 Cultural Trends | Intersections by Terri Elton (<http://terrielton.com/2013/07/30/12-cultural-trends/>) on July 30, 2013 at 11:57 am

[...] Carey Nieuwhof [...]

Reply

Brian French (<http://www.brianandkrista.com>) on July 30, 2013 at 7:57 am

Your point on user reviews is very helpful. What do you see as the leading influences that convince a person that the reviews are helpful (not paid by the organization, not trolls of the organization)? I can only think of critical mass.

Reply



cnieuwhof on July 30, 2013 at 8:33 pm

Brian I think that's a great question and I'd love to hear what others think. Personally, I wonder if part of it involves spontaneous tweets/status updates talking about the church in a way that's a natural part of their life. Facebook has a 'recommendations' section that's kind of like a Trip Advisor or Amazon ratings features without the stars. So that could play a role too. Anyone else have other ideas?

Reply



Chantel on July 14, 2013 at 6:06 pm

Guilt

used to motivate people to change and even to come to faith. The next generation feels less guilt than almost any previous generation. Are you

still using guilt to motivate people? – See more at:

<https://careynieuwhof.com/2013/06/12-cultural-trends-church-leaders-cant-ignore-but-might/#sthash.Tk7uUQrv.dpuf> (<https://careynieuwhof.com/2013/06/12-cultural-trends-church-leaders-cant-ignore-but-might/#sthash.Tk7uUQrv.dpuf>)

Reply

Leadership in 140 Characters | Eric Echols (<http://ericechols.net/2013/06/16/leadership-in-140-characters-36/>) on June 16, 2013 at 8:07 am

[...] 12 Cultural Trends Church Leaders Can't Ignore (But Might) by Carey Nieuwhof [...]

Reply

tellmisty (<http://www.MyStrategicMarketer.com>) on June 15, 2013 at 12:21 am

Biggest white elephant trend of all: Millennials embracing gay rights.

Reply

Jo on July 16, 2013 at 1:17 am

Embracing I say would be the right word for the current trend and while that is not our appropriate place as Christians, One thing the church DOES need to do is be accepting & Loving of the LGBT people. When you love people, they see God's love IN you and want that for themselves, & begin to change.

[Reply](#)

Carla Dietz on July 28, 2013 at 10:18 pm

So the goal of accepting & loving LGBTQ folks is to get them to change? They are not a trend, they are individuals who are not straight. Because one does not wish to change their gender identity that does not preclude them from being Christian. Is this an anti gay Christian group that I have wandered into?

[Reply](#)

R on July 30, 2013 at 8:01 pm

Whoa, calm down. The goal of accepting LGBTQ people is because Jesus loves them. There's no ulterior motive. What happens, though, to those who accept that love and walk with Jesus is that they change.

That's what His love does, it changes you for the better. It's changed every Christian, regardless of sexual orientation.

Reply

Carla Dietz on July 31, 2013 at 9:12 am

"Whoa, calm down" isn't helpful. I still hear in what you are saying that LGBTQ folks should change, albeit by the love of God or in your view Jesus Christ. I don't think they need to change at all. That is where our disagreement lies. It seems to be a difference in theological viewpoint. We do not need to accept LGBTQ people as a separate classification. They are brothers and sisters among us, living, breathing, worshipping just like straight folks. The spectrum of sexuality and gender identity is vast and God created all of it. Surely there is room at the Christian table for people to be just exactly who they are within the parameters of adult consent, respect for individuality and an eye on the good of the whole community. Bottom line is I do not believe that the teachings of Jesus says they need to change via love or anything else.

Duncan Vann on September 20, 2013 at 9:32 am

This is a really difficult one.

I can welcome pretty much any kind of sinner into the church. They don't have to realise everything they are doing is wrong right off the bat.

They can change later. Meanwhile,

I'm more interested in welcoming the person than in fixing their sin, so I don't actually have to have an ulterior motive (though I might – it is so tempting to

try and fix people). Anyway, who says their sin is worse than mine? So they can be a sinner and a believer just like me; and sort of transform. And the church has got much better at welcoming all sorts of sinners in the last 25 years, in my view.

But homosexuality can be part of someone's identity. So when we think about them changing, R, and feel so good about how accommodating we are being; it's as if we've told a

woman she's welcome in the church even if it takes her a long time to become a man. And that's offensive and unloving no matter how loving I am intending to be.

And that's a problem. Because all the ways I try to show I'm loving (and, giving myself the benefit of the doubt, all the ways I actually am loving) end up still leaving me looking like a hater and (more to the point) presenting God as unloving. Unless I change my mind and accept that homosexual activity is all ok; and Carla that doesn't seem to be what scripture is saying or so far as I can tell what God likes; and I trust him.

There's a bit more scope in 'real life' than online (the concept irl feels out of date on this board), because if I'm drinking a pint with someone or if my kids are playing with theirs, it's a bit of a clue that I don't actually hate them. But I'm still not happy about this. It's no good being right, even if I am, if I can't show God's love.

Tony Burton on January 12, 2014 at 5:26 pm

Just curious, though, Carla: why come to a church at all, if there is no need for "change" in your life? I don't think R is saying that the change needs to be in the sexual orientation of anyone. Rather, change in the form of healthy growth and growing in love.

Carla Dietz on January 12, 2014 at 6:04 pm

Hi Tony! I don't go to church in order to change, per se. I go (and I realize this is a personal subject and different for different individuals) to be in communion with a power greater than all of us, which I call God but that which transcends our understanding. Going to church (again for me) is a meditation where I find a better understanding of the meaning of life and an opportunity to grow in compassion toward my fellow human beings. So you and I are on the same page with the idea of church being a place for healthy growth and growing in love.

Josh Arrington on August 5, 2014 at 6:50 pm

Carla – Let's not get caught up in the specific LGBT topic at hand, at least not at this moment. Instead, let's just focus on the assertion that you don't go to church to change (*per se*). While I applaud and agree with your desire to connect with God as a chief goal, for Christians, change and worship go hand in hand. We come to Christ in order to be changed and without being willing to be changed, we cannot come to Christ. The very core of our need for Christ is a need for change – in the beginning, mankind chose sin over relationship in an effort to "be like God". To return to relationship, we need not only forgiveness but also repentance where we turn from our desires to control and to be like God and turn toward Him openhanded, giving back control of everything including our defining of what is good, right, etc... This is the core of Paul's message in Romans 12:1-2 where he teaches us that being changed and true worship are the same thing. "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Carla Dietz on August 5, 2014 at 7:19 pm

Disagree again, Josh. I do not come to church to be changed nor do I love and honor the message of Jesus Christ in order to be changed. Since we're on a quoting fiesta, Martin Luther said we are saved by Grace alone (*sola gracia*) and that is not about asking Jesus to change us. The difference at the crossroad between your theology and mine, I think, is that I follow Jesus but worship God. I am going to guess you worship Jesus which is certainly your prerogative, though my studies and understanding is that Jesus never intended us to do so. I am a disciple of Jesus and worship God through Jesus. That is how I understand those two parts of the trinity. The third part of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, I believe was given to us to unify our understanding of God. God is the Big Kahuna and that is who I worship. If God is interested in my changing, my experience tells me God is fully capable of doing that without my asking. God found me, I did not have to find God. I feel blessed to be God's child with all my faults, mistakes, the good and bad. I am inspired by the Holy Spirit and by the message that Jesus gave us to be as good a person as I can but true change or growth is in God's hands.

Beth Beyer Abbott on April 7, 2014 at 8:27 am

I am not a millennial, but have a child who is and a couple of Gen X'rs. They have no doubt that EVERYONE is a beloved, unique gift from God. The LGBTQ community doesn't need to be changed, it needs to be recognized as just as worthy, just as loved, just as perfect as the rest of us. The little church where I attend practices what it preaches. God is love. God loves you.

Reply

Canadaclub on June 11, 2013 at 8:47 am

The word I hear all the time is " We did that way before and it worked back then" . The church needs to be relevant to the changes in society. We do not change the message of salvation but how the timeless message is presented. The biggest issue I hear is the lack of connection people feel in a Church body. Surprise, surprise... all we do today is text , twitter ,E-mail etc. Lord, shake up our hearts and let us move outside the box. Anywhere we go You will be with us IF we put you first in everything!!

Reply

12 Cultural Trends | Insomniac memos (<http://insomniacmemos.wordpress.com/2013/06/11/12-cultural-trends/>) on June 10, 2013 at 10:08 pm

[...] Interesting list to think about. My guess is that lots of churches and religious leaders are not fully engaging these trends. [...]

[Reply](#)



Monica Dennington (<http://www.TicTocMinistries.com/>) on June 9, 2013 at 5:59 am

Thanks for sharing your well thought out list. These trends will be challenging, especially for the large organizations and denominations, quite possibly delivering them to their final resting place as a wikipedia history article. Just as in Jesus day, one person today can have an impact that a room full of money can't buy.

[Reply](#)



cnieuwhof on June 10, 2013 at 10:44 am

True Monica. Sometimes the truth is a great motivator.

[Reply](#)

Tom on July 30, 2013 at 2:34 pm

The truth is a much better motivator than guilt. □

[Reply](#)

Johnny Driver on June 8, 2013 at 7:16 pm

This is good and true; however, you left out that we don't like to be analyzed and targeted □

[Reply](#)

cnieuwhof on June 10, 2013 at 10:44 am

Who's analyzing? □

[Reply](#)

Daniel on June 7, 2013 at 8:23 pm

On the twelve trends number five you say that Jesus never used guilt. While I don't feel guilt is such a good motivating means, it does have its place such as the parables Jesus used when the Scribes and Pharisees were in earshot.

[Reply](#)

N on June 8, 2013 at 11:15 am

I understand Jesus as one who assumed guilt. In that sense He 'used' it... not to motivate behaviour, but to motivate relief. His culture was far more in tune with guilt than we are today, and that is our modern problem... our culture is shameless. Would Jesus want the Real Housewives to take a long look in the mirror to their horror? I think He might.

[Reply](#)

Mark G on June 8, 2013 at 10:46 pm

actually , the culture that jesus lived in was not a culture motivated nor familiar with guilt .. the middle east was (and continues to be) an honour/shame society which has a completely different set of social rules and norms that regulate. Jesus parables connect with these social norms and the teachings make much more sense when one understands that.

Reply



cnieuwhof on June 8, 2013 at 11:46 am

You're right Daniel about using guilt or something like it to speak to insiders, but Jesus never used it to my knowledge on outsiders. Funny how in the church today we often do the opposite.

Reply



KBH on June 9, 2013 at 10:06 am

a pattern we see is that the people at the feet of Jesus were people who knew they were guilty. ie, "she loved much because she was forgiven much". In the light of person of Christ some people saw their sin and were moved to repentance and faith.

So it may not seem like Jesus is using guilt, but his very presence provokes an awareness of their sin.

Of course many of the religious leaders did not respond to Christ that way, they were hardened of heart and would not repent.

So I think Jesus used guilt with people who didn't know they were guilty. (ie rich young man) For this generation, that is almost everyone. I think without a knowledge of the holiness of God and our sinfulness, people will not run to Christ for forgiveness, and then live a life of gratitude for the great mercy they have received.

Reply



JohnJ on June 12, 2013 at 2:27 pm

How about the woman at the well? (John 4:18)

Reply

Brad on June 7, 2013 at 5:32 pm

The common denominator for all of these is autonomy. Technology, wealth, education, social media, all increase our ability to be autonomous. Ironically, it results with greater breadth of connectedness, but significantly less depth in connectedness. Whatever the solution is to those trends, it better demonstrate and invite into greater depth of connectedness.

[Reply](#)

cnieuwhof on June 7, 2013 at 6:52 pm

Brad that's such a great point. Thanks for the thoughtful response.

[Reply](#)

David Kueker on June 9, 2013 at 9:12 am

Autonomy is a great word ... but this might also reflect differentiation as well.

[Reply](#)

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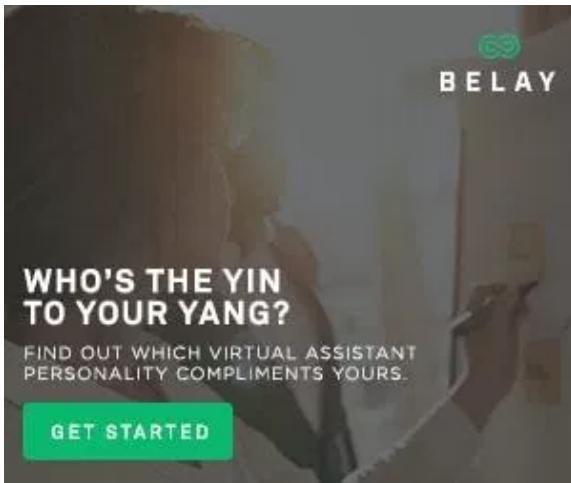
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